

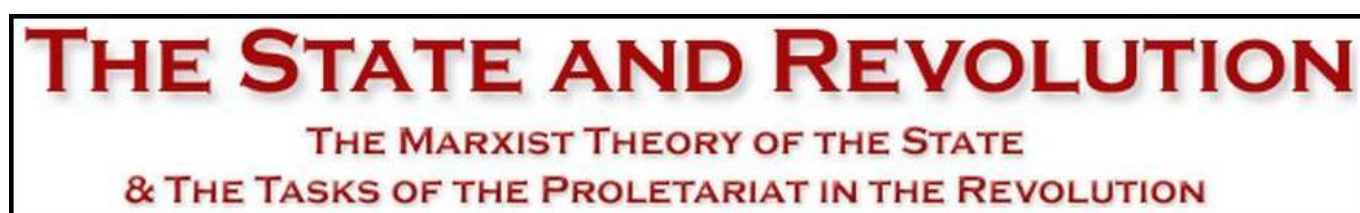


# Communist University Introductions

*These texts may be used as “openings to discussion” of the original reading texts that are supplied by the CU. They are not intended to be authoritative or conclusive. They are contributions to discussion like any other such contributions. The introductions are not a substitute for the reading texts.*

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State and Revolution, Part 0



## Lenin's The State and Revolution

### *Short General Introduction*

[The State and Revolution](#) is a book of Lenin's that was written in the months between the February and October Russian Revolutions of 1917.

The book is an uncompromising description of The State and of how it can be revolutionised, written as a revisit to, and critique of, the writings of Marx and Engels on the one hand, and of those of various reformist, opportunist and anarchist characters on the other hand, all the way up to Karl Kautsky.

At the outbreak in 1914 of the war that was still going on in 1917, Kautsky had been the leading renegade among the German Social Democrats of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International. The split that Kautsky and others caused, allowed the war to happen. If the

proletarian international had remained solid, the war could not have happened. The war only came to an armistice, in the West, in the following year. Kautsky continued to be a renegade until his death in 1938.

The State and Revolution is well worth studying in its entirety of six chapters. In form, it is ideal for the Freirean method of pedagogy through study circles. Each of the six chapters is of a suitable length for reading and discussion by a group that meets weekly. This Communist University course also includes parts of some of the documents mentioned by Lenin in the book, with other relevant and related material, and is thereby extended to our standard course-length of ten parts.

One problem that appears in relation to the State is whether, or to what extent, the State can be treated as benign, or developmental? In the SACP we do not repudiate Lenin, yet we still praise state ownership and state “delivery”. How are these things reconciled?

If the State is benign, then why would we want it to wither away?

But if the state is but *“a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”* [Marx/Engels, Communist Manifesto], and *“an Instrument for the Exploitation of the Oppressed Class”* [Lenin, State and Revolution] then how can it at the same time be beneficial?

We will reflect on these matters, among others, as we go through the work.

Lenin realised that the eventual transition to communism had to be secured in the process of the transition to socialism. He realised that there would be a moment of danger when it would be possible that the worker’s state could redevelop the characteristics of the bourgeois state.

This is what happened in the Soviet Union under Stalin, and the eventual consequence was the collapse and break-up of the Soviet Union into a scattering of bourgeois states. The revolution was not permanent, after all. The undead bourgeois state re-grew itself like a “Terminator”.

The next post will open the discussion of Lenin’s The State and Revolution with Lenin’s return to Petrograd in April 1917, and his declaration, at the Finland Station, of the “April Theses”.

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Lenin arrives at the Finland Station in April, 1917

## The April Theses

This is the first part of our ten-part course on Lenin's 1917 work "The State and Revolution". The book has only six chapters, which we will take one at a time from part 4 to part 9 of the course. In the first three parts we will try to furnish some of the prior political context. In part 10 we will pose the question of where Lenin's unfinished work would need to be taken, if it were to be extended in light of the new knowledge that we now have, nearly a century after Lenin's Bolshevik Revolution.

The year of 1917 in Russia was actually a year of two revolutions, and another revolution had gone before, in 1905. The 1905 revolution had seen the formation of the parliament (the Duma) and also the organs of Russian popular power, the Soviets. Both the Duma and the Soviets still existed in 1917.

The "Great War", or "First World War", of 1914-1918 was still going on, involving tens of millions of armed men in unparalleled slaughter. It was an inter-Imperialist

war. Russia was fighting Germany. The Bolsheviks (under Lenin's leadership from exile in Switzerland) had refused to take part in this inter-Imperialist war in any way, and instead denounced it and opposed it.

The February 1917 revolution established something resembling a bourgeois-democratic republic based on the Duma. Lenin returned to Russia from Switzerland by train in April, just over a month later. All kinds of questions remained to be resolved. The question of war and peace was the most urgent. The nature of the revolution was still to be decided. In between April and October, and among other things, Lenin pronounced the "April Theses", and wrote "The State and Revolution". We will begin with the first of these two.

The [April Theses](#) is a classic document, not because it is polished (it is rough), but because of its impact at a moment of history. It was given by Lenin verbally. The written version (download linked below) was prepared very shortly afterwards.

Lenin arrived in Petrograd (also called St Petersburg, and Leningrad) barely a month after the February, 1917 revolution which had overthrown the Tsar and installed the bourgeois republican government. This bourgeois government had the intention of continuing the disastrous intra-Imperialist war in which Russia was involved.

At the same time, faraway South Africa was also involved in the same war.

It was among those South Africans who opposed the 1914-18 Imperialist war that the need for our communist party was first seriously raised. The Communist Party of South Africa was formed by admission to the Communist International in 1921. That Communist International had been called for by Lenin in this document, the April Theses, in **Thesis 10**:

*"We must take the initiative in creating a revolutionary International, an International against the social-chauvinists and against the 'Centre'," it says.*

The Third International (also called Communist International or Comintern) was duly established in 1919.

The "social-chauvinists" of different individual countries (e.g. Germany, Britain, France and Italy as well as Russia) had supported the Imperialist war against each other, while the Russian Bolsheviks and the German Spartacists had opposed the war and had supported proletarian internationalism. The term "revolutionary defencism" was a code for the further continuation of the Russian war policy, which Lenin clearly opposes in **Thesis 1**.

The “April Theses” are short and do not therefore need a long introduction, but one can usefully highlight the following:

**Thesis 2** says: *“The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that the country is passing from the first stage of the revolution — which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organisation of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie — ...*

*“This peculiar situation demands of us an ability to adapt ourselves to the special conditions of Party work among unprecedentedly large masses of proletarians who have just awakened to political life.”*

There are echoes of this situation in South Africa today.

**Thesis 4** says: *“As long as we are in the minority we carry on the work of criticising and exposing errors and at the same time we preach the necessity of transferring the entire state power to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies, so that the people may overcome their mistakes by experience.”*

This led to the slogan **“All Power to the Soviets”**, and **Thesis 5** then says *“to return to a parliamentary republic from the Soviets of Workers' Deputies would be a retrograde step.”*

**Thesis 8** says: *“It is not our immediate task to “introduce” socialism, but only to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies.”* In other words, the bourgeois dictatorship was to be replaced at once by a dictatorship over the bourgeoisie.

**Thesis 9** proposes to change the Party’s name from “Social Democrat” (RSDLP) to “Communist Party.”

So much of this did come to pass, as we know, that it is difficult to imagine that Lenin’s support for these demands, among the leadership and even among the strictly Bolshevik leadership, was quite small.

But Lenin knew how the base of the Party was constructed and how it was reproducing itself. Hence he was able to be bold. He knew that the Bolshevik cadre force as a whole, and potentially the entire working masses of Russia, were behind his proposals, or soon would be. And so it came to pass.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The April Theses, 1917, Lenin.](#)





1848 in Germany

## Permanent Revolution

In the thick of revolution great questions are suddenly thrust forward demanding decisive responses, in circumstances where the revolutionary forces - the Subject of History - are hardly coherent and may still be largely clandestine, and therefore invisible. In 1917 the revolution managed to articulate itself, as we will see during this course on “The State and Revolution”, to a considerable extent by reference to previous revolutionary experiences. One such passage of history began in 1848 and involved Karl Marx, who, like Lenin, applied himself to making clear the necessities of the moment, the line-of-march to be followed, and the allies to be taken.

Karl Marx’s March 1850 Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League begins by describing the working proletariat as the “only decisively revolutionary class”, and ends with a battle-cry for the workers: “The Permanent Revolution!”

In the Address, Marx is advocating all possible means of achieving revolutionary change which, if not theoretically irreversible, would nevertheless in practice not be reversed.

*“The workers’ party must go into battle with the maximum degree of organization, unity and independence, so that it is not exploited and taken in tow by the*

*bourgeoisie,”* said Marx, with the events of the previous two years in mind, when the bourgeois allies of the working class had treacherously sold the workers out as soon as they could secure favourable terms for themselves from the reactionary feudal powers.

Marx then very frankly reviews the competing self-interests of the contending classes and fractions of the bourgeoisie.

*“There is no doubt that during the further course of the revolution in Germany, the petty-bourgeois democrats will for the moment acquire a predominant influence. The question is, therefore, what is to be the attitude of the proletariat, and in particular of the League towards them,”* declared Marx.

***“As in the past, so in the coming struggle also, the petty bourgeoisie, to a man, will hesitate as long as possible and remain fearful, irresolute and inactive; but when victory is certain it will claim it for itself and will call upon the workers to behave in an orderly fashion, to return to work and to prevent so-called excesses, and it will exclude the proletariat from the fruits of victory,”*** warned Marx.

The working class must *“be independently organized and centralized in clubs,”* and *“it is the task of the genuinely revolutionary party... to carry through the strictest centralization,”* wrote Marx. Reading this section, it becomes clear that Marx was convinced that the building of the democratic republic and the building of the nation had to be one and the same set of actions.

The working-class tactics in alliance with the bourgeois democrats should be to *“force the democrats to make inroads into as many areas of the existing social order as possible,”* and constantly to *“drive the proposals of the democrats to their logical extreme”*.

The workers must always look ahead to the next act of the revolutionary drama. They will:

*“contribute most to their final victory by informing themselves of their own class interests, by taking up their independent political position as soon as possible, and by not allowing themselves to be misled by the hypocritical phrases of the democratic petty bourgeoisie into doubting for one minute the necessity of an independently organized party of the proletariat.”*

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League, Karl Marx, 1850.](#)**



Lenin, shortly after the Revolution

## The State

This part of our course on “The State and Revolution” comprises of Lenin’s lecture, “[The State](#)” (download linked below). This lecture was given in July, 1919, two years after the writing of “The State and Revolution”, and less than two years after the Great October 1917 revolution. It can help us to revise quickly the main considerations of the State and what that thing really is, as a partial preparation for study of the earlier work, which ranges much wider.

In “[Bourgeois and Proletarians](#)”, the first section of the [Communist Manifesto](#), Karl Marx wrote:

*“The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.”*



In other words: The modern State is the executive committee of the ruling bourgeois class, of which there is not, and cannot be, any other such ruling executive committee or totalising authority.

The State manifests itself in many ways. Not only is it Legislature, Executive and Judiciary, but it also includes the “Special Bodies of Armed Men” (police, intelligence and military), the “sovereign document” of the Constitution, the State Owned Enterprises, and the “Delivery” departments like Education, Health, Public Works; and others.

Concerning the state, in his speech to the COSATU Central Committee on 28 July 2011, SACP General Secretary Dr Blade Nzimande said:

*“There is a distinction but very close relationship between ‘government’ and the ‘state’. Government represents the highest most concentration of the power of the state, but government does not constitute the entirety of the state. The state is made up of its executive arm (Cabinet and the bureaucracy), the legislature(s) and the judiciary, as well as other organs of state. As to who the executive arm of the state and the composition of parliament is largely determined through electoral means, but the totality of the character and nature of the state is not principally determined by elections, but instead by the balance of class forces in broader society. It is therefore possible, as I will illustrate later in the speech, that a particular party can win elections, but at the same time its views and interests not be the dominant ones in the state. In 1994 we inherited an apartheid state apparatus, that we have not smashed entirely, and key components of the apartheid state still reflects itself in the bureaucracy, the judiciary and in various other areas of the state, not least the ideological orientation of the state organs.”*

As communists we hold fast to the concept of the State as the instrument of class power that enforces and perpetuates bourgeois class dictatorship in our country. We do not believe that the State is neutral, or above class struggle. The State is the principal instrument of class struggle on behalf of the ruling bourgeois class.

We intend that there should as soon as possible be no class division and therefore that the State as we know it would become redundant and give way to social self-management, or in other words, to communism – true freedom.

Yet the term “State” is nowadays used in other, less strict senses, and we as political people who must communicate with others, do also use the word in other senses than the above. For example, we sometimes use the phrase “Developmental State”,

which even if we ourselves would qualify its meaning, is nevertheless widely understood as meaning a State that is equally beneficial to all classes (i.e. is a “win-win”, or classless, or neutral state).

We are fortunate to have the lecture that Lenin [pictured] gave to students in Moscow in 1919 on this topic, wherein Lenin asks:

*“what is the state, how did it arise and fundamentally what attitude to the state should be displayed by the party of the working class, which is fighting for the complete overthrow of capitalism - the Communist Party?”*

Lenin referred his audience to Engels’ [“Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State”](#). This book of Engels’ sweeps through the whole human story and explains the fall of the women, as well as class struggle and the state. We will take it as our next part, and then, for the fuller treatment from Lenin, there is the extraordinary work that he produced between the two Russian revolutions of February and October, 1917: [“The State and Revolution”](#), Chapter 1 of which will be our fourth part of this course.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Lecture on The State, 1919, Lenin](#).
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## Origin of Family, Property and State

Today we feature Chapter 9, the chapter called “Barbarism and Civilisation”, of Frederick Engels’ book “[The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State](#)”. The Chapter is attached, and linked below as a download.

If you find them difficult, don’t worry too much about the first three paragraphs of this chapter. They partly refer to previous chapters. The remainder of Chapter 9 is self-contained.

“The Origin of the Family, Private Property and The State” is a classic of the first rank, both within the field of Marxism, and more widely.

Lenin relied on it, and referred to it often for the illumination that it gives to the revolutionary question of The State and to the necessity of the withering away of the State.

But this work of Engels’ is also foundational in Archaeology and Paleoanthropology (i.e. the study of the pre-history of human society), just as Engels’ “[The Condition of the Working Class in England](#)” was foundational to the study of the formation of cities – Urbanism (also called Urban Studies or Town Planning). Engels, who never formally went to a university, is one of the towering historic founders of scholarly disciplines.

### Morgan and Marx

Marx had already worked on source material for this project, including on Henry Morgan’s 1877 eyewitness book called “[Ancient Society](#)”. Engels found Marx’s

working papers after Marx's death in 1883 and immediately set to work to prepare a book from them for publication.

The particular contribution of "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" is that it shows the common, interdependent origin of private property and the State, plus the fall of the women into the oppressive condition which they still continue to suffer, and also the institutions of money, writing and law.

The simultaneous revolutionary break in all of these things marks the end of pre-history and the beginning of history, which as Marx and Engels had noted in the [Communist Manifesto](#), was from that point onwards "a history of class struggles".

The transition from prehistoric communism into class society took place a long time ago in some parts of the world, and much more recently in other parts. In Egypt and Iraq (Mesopotamia) it may have happened more than five thousand years ago. In most other parts of the world the transition was quite recent.

### **Communism, a necessity for women**

The simultaneous nature of the triple catastrophe (property, state and downfall of women) means that the remedy for all three will likewise have to be simultaneous. The urgent abolition or "withering away" of the State is for that reason a woman's issue, and the socialist project is a woman's project, because they are all part of the same complex of oppressions. Communism is a necessity for women.

The reversal of the downfall of the women can only be achieved by the abolition of property and the State. Likewise, the abolition of property and the State cannot be achieved without the conscious restoration of women to their proper place in human society. All three goals have to be achieved together. The three goals are actually the same goal, and the name of it is [communism](#).

**Image:** Another way of explaining the origins of human society: Adam, Eve, and the Apple (The Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), by [Tamara de Lempicka](#). The middle image is a representation of a "money tree" from the Internet. The other image is from the front of Thomas Hobbes' "Leviathan", which revealed the State in the mid-seventeenth century.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Origin of Family, Property and State, Chapter 9, 1884, Engels](#).
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## Class Society and the State

V I Lenin wrote "The State and Revolution" between the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, and the October 1917 proletarian revolution. The October Revolution dramatically interrupted his writing, leaving the work unfinished. [Picture: Lenin in 1917]

SACP 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin once remarked that South Africa is in some ways stuck "between February and October", meaning to compare our SA situation during the (now) 21 years since 1994, with the eight months in 1917 between the two Russian revolutions.

This is one reason why it is worthwhile to run all six chapters of "The State and Revolution" as a course, set or series of the Communist University. In length, they are well suited to the purpose. It is more than likely that this kind of treatment, and this way of collective study, was exactly what Lenin had in mind when he wrote the work. He referred to it as a "pamphlet", which would tend to mean a text for mass agitational propaganda.



The urgency of Lenin's revolutionary purpose is apparent from the first paragraph, as is the priority that he gives to the understanding of The State as a product of, and integral to, the exploitative class-divided social system that the Bolsheviks were determined to overthrow.

Hence the first words are a definition and a challenge to those who would think otherwise: *"The State: a Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Antagonisms"*

In the first paragraph Lenin refers to the embracing of "Marxism" by the respectable bourgeoisie, and their pleasure at the amenability of *"the labour unions which are so splendidly organized for the purpose of waging a predatory war!"*

The great 1914-1918 war that was raging at the time was more than an incidental background to the Russian Revolutions of 1917. Like the lethal global neo-liberalism of recent times, the "First World War" (the Imperialist war) had seduced the major part of the social-democratic organisations that claimed to represent the working class. The structures of the working class had turned against the working class, and the crux of the matter, then as now, was The State. Lenin is unequivocal:

*"The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable."*

Lenin proceeds to write that the overthrow of the bourgeois state has to be direct and forcible, whereas the withering-away of the proletarian state can only be the indirect consequence of the progressive disappearance of class antagonism during the transitional period called socialism.

"The State and Revolution" goes to the heart of the revolutionary theory of class struggle, sharpens all contradictions, and draws clear lessons that are still relevant today, especially for South Africa.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [State and Revolution, C1, Class Society and State, Lenin, 1917.](#)
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Paris, February 1848

## **Eighteen-Forty-Eight**

Lenin spends the first five of the six existing chapters of “The State and Revolution” tracing the development of the thought of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. In Chapter 2 (attached), he sweeps through their accounts of the period of bourgeois revolutions in mid-nineteenth-century Europe that started in 1848.

Marx and Engels had good timing. Engels had witnessed Manchester in the early 1840s in the full bloom of its emergence as the first great industrial-capitalist city of the world. He had also, with Marx, engaged in literary disputes with the Young Hegelians in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany, and other disputes with the anarchists of the time. They had also corresponded with the Chartists in Britain. They had spent time organising the working class in Paris and in Brussels.



**Berlin, March 1848**

Then they found themselves on the crest of the extraordinary revolutionary wave of 1848, and so they were well-positioned to record it and to learn its lessons, just as they were with later crucial episodes, notably the Paris Commune of 1871.

In the first line of Chapter 2 Lenin describes “The Poverty of Philosophy” (together with the Communist Manifesto), written in 1847 when Marx was still in his twenties, as “the first mature works of Marxism.” The book was written as a polemic against one, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, of several anarchists that Marx had to contend with. These anarchists tested and tempered Marx’s and Engels’ resolve, in hard debate.

Lenin moves on to the Communist Manifesto, where he immediately derives the term “dictatorship of the proletariat” from the equally direct words of the Marx and Engels in the Manifesto, namely: *“the state, i.e. the proletariat organised as the ruling class”*.

*“The state is a special organization of force: it is an organization of violence for the suppression of some class.”*

The proletariat will create a state to suppress the bourgeois class.





**Chartist rally, Kennington, London, 1848**

Lenin then turns on the reformists. Later, in Chapter 3, Lenin calls the anarchists and the petty-bourgeois opportunists “twin brothers”.

Here in Chapter 2 he writes:

*“The petty-bourgeois democrats, those sham socialists who replaced the class struggle by dreams of class harmony, even pictured the socialist transformation in a dreamy fashion — not as the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class, but as the peaceful submission of the minority to the majority which has become aware of its aims. This petty-bourgeois utopia, which is inseparable from the idea of the state being above classes, led in practice to the betrayal of the interests of the working classes.”*

The chapter proceeds to touch “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”. It returns to Marx on the dictatorship of the proletariat, this time in those very terms, in a letter written in 1852; and Lenin says: *“Only he is a Marxist who extends the recognition of the class struggle to the recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat.”*

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [State and Revolution, Chapter 2, The Experience of 1848-1851, Lenin.](#)



[Pierre-Joseph Proudhon](#) and his daughters, by Gustave Courbet, 1865

## The Poverty of Philosophy

In Chapter 2 of his 1917 between-revolutions work “[The State and Revolution](#)”, V I Lenin wrote that “*The first works of mature Marxism — [The Poverty of Philosophy](#) and the [Communist Manifesto](#) — appeared just on the eve of the revolution of 1848.*” Among other things, “The State and Revolution” was Lenin’s own well-designed course on The Classics, moving through the works of Marx and Engels and revealing the spine or theme of the entire body of work.

We have elsewhere looked at this question and concluded that [The German Ideology](#), including the [Theses on Feuerbach](#), all written between 1845 and 1847 but not published in full until 1932, long after Lenin’s death in 1924, ought to be recognised as one of the “first works of mature Marxism”.

With all these, we have a reasonably clear-cut beginning to the “canon” of Marxism, in terms of time and of specific works. But what is the nature of this beginning, as revealed in these works?

One part of the answer to this question is polemic, which is a kind of argument that proceeds from criticism of an opponent’s ideas expressed in text, carefully examined and dissected. These works of Marx’s and Engels’ are polemical. The



German Ideology was a polemic against [Bruno Bauer](#) and against [Max Stirner](#), an anarchist who had previously published a book called “The Ego and Its Own”. Another anarchist opponent of Marx and Engels in the early 1840s was [Wilhelm Weitling](#). The Poverty of Philosophy, started in January 1847 and published the same year, was a polemic against a third anarchist, [Pierre-Joseph Proudhon](#), who had written a book called “[The Philosophy of Poverty](#)”.

In case we should get too particular about the term “anarchism”, it can help to recall what Lenin wrote in Chapter 3 of The State and Revolution, namely that *“anarcho-syndicalism... is merely the twin brother of opportunism.”* The imprecision of anarchism is one of its faults. Its distinction from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois liberalism is not clear, because it is actually non-existent. Marx’s polemic in “The Poverty of Philosophy” is directed against these faults, and others.

It is as well to use this opportunity to remind ourselves that there was no innocent Garden of Eden for Marxism before it was assailed by anarchists, “ultra-lefts”, revisionists, reformists and all sorts of deviationists, *escamoteurs* and demagogues. In fact, there was not even as much as one minute of peace for Marxism before it had to contend with all of these kinds of opponents. On the contrary, Marxism was actually conceived in this very same argument. The argument with the anarchists was itself the creative act. There was no Marxism prior to its polemical fights with anarchism, and it is fated to contend with these same foes in their many variations until the day that class struggle finally ends and the communist parties disband themselves.

The selected text from The Poverty of Philosophy, attached, and downloadable via the link given below, is a compilation of Part 3 of Chapter 2, together with the last pages of the book, which last pages comprise what is arguably the first concise full statement of Marxism.

It is not necessary for our present purposes to follow every twist and turn of Marx’s argument in Part 3 of The Poverty of Philosophy. Most of it is in any case lucid and clear, although it is sometimes not easy to tell which is Marx’s own voice, and which is Marx speaking satirically in Proudhon’s voice.

Some highlights include the following passage, where Marx anticipates both Capital Volume 3 and also the current banking crisis and US home-loan bubble:

*“Competition is not industrial emulation, it is commercial emulation. In our time industrial emulation exists only in view of commerce. There are even phases in the economic life of modern nations when everybody is seized with a sort of craze for making profit without producing. This speculation craze,*

*which recurs periodically, lays bare the true character of competition, which seeks to escape the need for industrial emulation.”*

In the final part, Marx begins by advocating “combination”, which is the creation of mass democratic organisations, especially trade unions. He finds what Lenin calls the “twin brothers” - the reformist bourgeois economists and the utopian socialists - both arguing against combination (unions); yet he notes that the more advanced the countries become, the greater is the degree of combination. This kind of association then takes on a political character, says Marx.

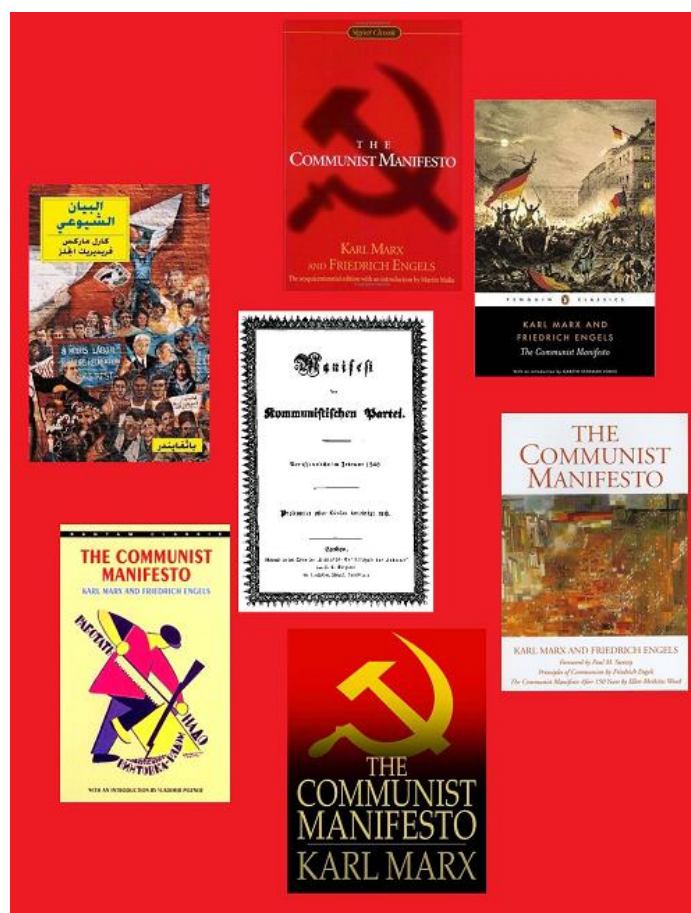
In the final page Marx writes:

*“An oppressed class is the vital condition for every society founded on the antagonism of classes. The emancipation of the oppressed class thus implies necessarily the creation of a new society... The condition for the emancipation of the working class is the abolition of every class... ...there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society... ...the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is a struggle of class against class, a struggle which carried to its highest expression is a total revolution.”*

This is classic Marxism.

The image above is a reproduction of a painting of Proudhon made in 1865 by the great Realist painter [Gustave Courbet](#) who in 1871 was placed in charge of all art museums by the [Paris Commune](#), and who was as a result subsequently exiled to Switzerland, where he died.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The Poverty of Philosophy, Karl Marx, 1847, excerpts](#).
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The Communist Manifesto is constantly re-published

## Bourgeois, Proletarians and Communists

The [Communist Manifesto](#) is a classic by any standards. It is never out of print and it is stocked in ordinary bookshops all over the world, selling steadily year after year.

The work was started in mid-1847 in England by Frederick Engels and Karl Marx when Marx was 29 and Engels 27, and was published in January or February of 1848, just in time for the outbreak of revolutions all over Europe.

All of the Communist Manifesto is memorable, but especially the first two parts (“[Bourgeois and Proletarians](#)”, and “[Proletarians and Communists](#)”) given in the downloadable file, linked below. The third part is called “[Socialist and Communist Literature](#)” and the fourth part of one page is called “[Position of the Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties](#)”. A fifth part that was not included is the catechism- or FAQ-style document called “[The Principles of Communism](#)” drafted by Frederick Engels.

## **Bourgeois and Proletarians**

The new masters, the formerly slave-owning but now capitalist bourgeoisie, also known as burghers or burgesses, were a class that had grown up in the towns under the rule of rural-based feudalism (“traditional leadership”). Marx and Engels were convinced that the bourgeoisie were themselves sooner or later going to be overthrown by the working proletariat, the class of free citizens owning nothing but their Labour-Power, that the bourgeoisie had brought into existence by employing them. The bourgeoisie had taken over from the feudal lords by revolution. They would themselves be toppled by revolution, said Marx and Engels.

Commissioned to write the Manifesto by the Communist League, Marx and Engels struggled to meet the agreed deadline, but came through with a magnificent text published just prior to the February, 1848 events in Paris. These events brought the proletariat as actors on to the stage of history to an extent that had never been seen before, thoroughly vindicating Engels and Marx.

Short as it is, the Manifesto is so rich and so compressed as to be saturated with meaning, and practically impossible to summarise. Here are some of the most extraordinary sentences of the first section of the Manifesto:

*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.*

*Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other - bourgeoisie and proletariat.*

*The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.*

*All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify.*

*All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.*

*The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.*

## Proletarians and Communists

The second part of the Communist Manifesto contains statements about the Communist Party, about the family, about religion, and frank statements about the bourgeoisie.

The second part shows, among other things, the centrality of the relations of production that create and sustain the effect known as capital, which then in turn defines everything else in bourgeois society.

“Proletarians and Communists” also looks forward to the way that society can be changed, and thus serves to remind us that Marx’s work is always intentional, and is never merely empirical, descriptive or disinterested.

*“The average price of wage labour is the minimum wage, i.e., that quantum of the means of subsistence which is absolutely requisite to keep the labourer in bare existence as a labourer,”* wrote Marx and Engels.

*“But does wage labour create any property for the labourer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage labour, and which cannot increase except upon conditions of begetting a new supply of wage labour for fresh exploitation.”*

They finish the section with this unforgettable, classic vision:

***“...a vast association of the whole nation... in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.”***

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Bourgeois and Proletarians](#); [Proletarians and Communists](#), Communist Manifesto, Marx/Engels, 1848.
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Louis Bonaparte's balancing act

## The 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

In the following part of Marx's outline of the events from "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (see the attached files, or click on the links below for downloads containing a longer selection) it is clear that the proletariat suffered a disaster in Paris in June of 1848, when it had no allies and was isolated and attacked by all the other classes together, and massacred.

This is the isolation that the proletariat must always avoid, and it is one reason why the working class must always have allies. Here is the brief quotation:

*"a. May 4 to June 25, 1848. Struggle of all classes against the proletariat. Defeat of the proletariat in the June days.*

*"b. June 25 to December 10, 1848. Dictatorship of the pure bourgeois republicans. Drafting of the constitution. Proclamation of a state of siege in Paris. The bourgeois dictatorship set aside on December 10 by the election of Bonaparte as President."*

In the “18th Brumaire” the contenders of the Great French Revolution reappear, namely the Aristocracy, the Peasantry (known as the *Montagne* – the “Mountain”), the Bourgeoisie and the working Proletariat.

Also described are the serious contradictions within the bourgeois class; the classless, manipulative Bonaparte, who played the four main classes off against each other for more than two decades, until he lost the plot; and the “*lumpen-proletariat*” (proletariat-in-rags) of idle adventurers who were Bonaparte’s willing accomplices, paid with “whisky and sausages”.

Juggling the different class interests and playing the different classes against each other, as Louis Bonaparte did for twenty years or so, is what has ever since then been called “Bonapartism”. Thabo Mbeki managed his juggling act for only ten years. In Swaziland, the trick has been sustained for more than four times as long as that. In all three cases the main beneficiary of the interlude turned out to be the bourgeois class.

Here are four more of the most well-known paragraphs included in our selection from the “18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire”. They reveal a lot of the class dynamics that Marx describes in this classic work:

*“Only under the second Bonaparte does the state seem to have made itself completely independent. The state machinery has so strengthened itself vis-a-vis civil society that the Chief of the Society of December 10 [Louis Bonaparte] suffices for its head — an adventurer dropped in from abroad, raised on the shoulders of a drunken soldiery which he bought with **whisky and sausages** and to which he has to keep throwing more sausages. Hence the low-spirited despair, the feeling of monstrous humiliation and degradation that oppresses the breast of France and makes her gasp. She feels dishonored.*

*“And yet the state power is not suspended in the air. Bonaparte represented a class, and the most numerous class of French society at that, the small-holding peasants.*

*“Just as the Bourbons were the dynasty of the big landed property and the Orleans the dynasty of money, so the Bonapartes are the dynasty of the peasants, that is, the French masses. The chosen of the peasantry is not the Bonaparte who submitted to the bourgeois parliament but the Bonaparte who dismissed the bourgeois parliament. For three years the towns had succeeded in falsifying the meaning of the December 10 election and in*

*cheating the peasants out of the restoration of the Empire. The election of December 10, 1848, has been consummated only by the coup d'état of December 2, 1851. [i.e. when Louis Bonaparte made himself Emperor.]*

*“The small-holding peasants form an enormous mass whose members live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with each other. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is furthered by France's poor means of communication and the poverty of the peasants. Their field of production, the small holding, permits no division of labor in its cultivation, no application of science, and therefore no multifariousness of development, no diversity of talent, no wealth of social relationships. Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient, directly produces most of its consumer needs, and thus acquires its means of life more through an exchange with nature than in intercourse with society. A small holding, the peasant and his family; beside it another small holding, another peasant and another family. A few score of these constitute a village, and a few score villages constitute a department. Thus the great mass of the French nation is formed by the simple addition of homonymous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form **a sack of potatoes**. Insofar as millions of families live under conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests forms no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them, they do not constitute a class. They are therefore incapable of asserting their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. **Their representative must at the same time appear as their master**, as an authority over them, an unlimited governmental power which protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the small-holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power which subordinates society to itself.”*

This is the dictatorship that the peasantry, time and again, brings upon itself. The alternative to it is the dictatorship of the proletariat. The working class must supply the organising framework that the peasantry cannot produce for itself.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Chapter 1 and part of 6, and Chapter 7, Marx.](#)



**Course: Lenin's The State and Revolution**

**16001, The State and Revolution, Introductions Booklet 1 of 2**

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